

Message Text

SECRET

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41-S

ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 SP-02 OPR-01 A-01 PRS-01 SSO-00 /039 W

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P R 081150Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3699

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 3140

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PINS, LA

SUBJECT: ISSUES ARISING OUT OF DETERIORATING SITUATION
IN LAOS

1. THE RAPIDLY MOUNTING ACCUMULATION OF DEVELOPMENTS IN LAOS
IN THE WEEK SINCE SAIGON FELL, AND PARTICULARLY IN LAST TWO OR
THREE DAYS, HAVE ALL BUT ELIMINATED THE NON-COMMUNIST ELEMENT
OF THE LAO COALITION. FROM REPORTING IN THIS AND OTHER
CHANNELS, ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE OF THESE PRINCIPAL EVENTS:
A) NORTH VIETNAMESE TAKEOVER OF FORMER GVN CHANCERY AND
EFFORTS TO ASSUME CONTROL OF LOCAL VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY.
B) GROWING EXODUS, OR PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE, BY VIET-
NAMESE AND CHINESE MERCHANTS, AS WELL AS SOME LAO, WITH
RESULTING PRESSURE ON THE KIP (NOW DOWN TO 2200-2400 TO
THE DOLLAR ON SMALL TRANSACTIONS, AND DROPPING DAILY) AND
UPSURGE IN CONSULAR BUSINESS AT U.S. AND FRENCH EMBASSIES.
C) REINITIATION OF PL MILITARY ACTION BEGINNING AT SALA PHOU
KHOUN, WITH TANK-LED FORCES MOVING ON ROUTE 13 BOTH NORTH AND
SOUTH OF JUNCTION AND, IN LATTER DIRECTION, ALMOST TO VANG
VIENG AS OF MID-DAY MAY 8. OTHER PL FORCES ARE ALSO

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REPORTED AT HIEN HEUP (TG 19.63).

D) TIGHTENING ECONOMIC STRANGULATION OF LUANG PRABANG AS RESULT OF CLOSURE OF ROUTE 13.
E) DEMONSTRATION, SO FAR GENERALLY ORDERLY BUT WIDELY SUPPORTED, IN PAKSE WITH ECONOMIC GRIEVANCES AS OSTENSIBLE PUBLIC ISSUES, AND POSSIBILITY THAT DEMONSTRATION OF SIMILAR NATURE WILL BE ORGANIZED IN SAVANNAKHET.
F) SOUVANNA'S ORDERS TO MILITARY COMMANDERS, AND TO VANG PAO IN PARTICULAR, NOT TO OFFER RESISTANCE, WITH IMPLICITY THREAT THAT HE WILL REMOVE ANY WHO DO RESIST.
G) TALK OF RESIGNATION AMONG VIENTIANE SIDE CABINET MEMBERS (MR-V COMMANDER GENERAL THONGLITH RESIGNED MAY 8).
H) ASSASSINATIONS NIGHT OF MAY 6 OF PRINCE BOUN OM NA CHAMPASSAK AND COMPANIONS, WHO INCLUDED A RELATIVE OF ABHAY FAMILY AND A LEADER OF LOCAL CHINESE COMMUNITY, THUS STRIKING THREE PROMINENT GROUPS AT ONE BLOW AND REVIVING FEARS OF VIENTIANE SIDE LEADERS FOR THEIR SAFETY.

2. IT SEEMS APPARENT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS NOW DECIDED, PARTLY UNDER INFLUENCE OF EVENTS IN CAMBODIA AND VIET-NAM, THAT IT IS SIMPLY IMPRACTICABLE TO RESIST ANY NEW PL PRESSURE.

3. DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST U.S. AND THAI EMBASSIES THREATENED FOR MAY 8 DID NOT COME OFF, BUT THERE ARE IN PROSPECT DEMONSTRATIONS BY LAO LEFTISTS ON MAY 9 AND 11 AND BY PRO-COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE ON MAY 19, HO CHI MINH'S BIRTHDAY. DEMONSTRATIONS OF ANY SORT REMAIN TECHNICALLY BANNED BY SOUVANNA'S ORDER OF LAST JANUARY, WHICH WAS REITERATED AS A COMMUNIQUE AFTER THE MAY 7 CABINET MEETING AND BROADCAST OVER LAO NATIONAL RADIO MAY 8, BUT EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE ORDERS REMAINS IN DOUBT.

4. THESE SCHEDULED EVENTS AND OTHERS THAT ARE MERELY RUMORED (E.G., CLOSURE BY THE RTG OF THE THAI BORDER, AT ANY DATE THROUGH MAY 17) HEIGHTEN THE TENSION.

5. ASSUMING THAT THE VIENTIANE SIDE CONTINUES TO CRUMBLE (AND IT IS LARGELY GONE NOW), WE MAY BE FACED IN A MATTER OF DAYS WITH A DE FACTO PATHET LAO TAKEOVER OF THE GOVERNMENT. SOUVANNA MAY WELL REMAIN IN OFFICE AND THE FACADE
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OF COALITION MAY CONTINUE, BUT ANY REPLACEMENTS AMONG CABINET OFFICERS AND MILITARY REGION COMMANDERS ARE LIKELY TO BE SUBSERVIENT TO THE PATHET LAO.

6. THE PL MILITARY INTENT IS STILL NOT CLEAR, ALTHOUGH THE MINIMUM OBJECTIVE APPEARS TO BE THE ISOLATION OF MR II. WHATEVER THE INTENT, IT HAS BECOME EVIDENT IN LAST FEW DAYS THAT FEW FAR COMMANDERS OR TROOPS ARE DISPOSED TO

RESIST. IT IS NO LONGER A QUESTION OF HOW WELL THE FAR
WOULD FIGHT BUT WHETHER ANY SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS WOULD
FIGHT AT ALL.

7. WE DO NOT AT THIS TIME FORESEE A MILITARY THREAT TO
VIENTIANE OR OTHER URBAN AREAS EXCEPT VANG VIENG (FROM
WHICH WE EVACUATED OPERATION BROTHERHOOD PERSONNEL MAY 7).
WE BELIEVE THAT THE PATHET LAO IN PRESENT CLIMATE WILL BE
ABLE TO ACHIEVE MOST IF NOT ALL OF THEIR IMMEDIATE
POLITICAL/MILITARY OBJECTIVES WITHOUT USE OF MORE THAN
A TOKEN AMOUNT OF FORCE. WE MUST ANTICIPATE, HOWEVER,
GROWING PRESSURE FOR AN END TO U.S. AND ASSOCIATED FOREIGN
PRESENCE IN THE PROVINCES SUCH AS FILIPINOS, JAPANESE PEACE
CORPS, AND BRITISH V.S.O. A DEMAND TO THIS EFFECT IS
HIGH ON THE LIST OF THE PAKSE DEMONSTRATORS AND WILL
SPREAD. THE EFFECTIVE TERMINATION OF OUR OPERATIONS IN
BAN HOU EI SAI AND THE PRESSURE BROUGHT ON THE DOOLEY
FOUNDATION NURSES IN KHONG ISLAND, WHICH LED TO THEIR
RELOCATION TO PAKSE OVER THE WEEKEND, ARE FORETASTES
THAT GIVE SUBSTANCE TO SUCH A TREND. ANY SUCH DEVELOP-
MENT WILL INCREASE THE STRAIN ON OUR DEPENDENTS AND LOCAL
EMPLOYEES, WHICH IS ALREADY EVIDENT IN VIENTIANE, AND HAS
LED US TO AUTHORIZE THE USAID AREA COORDINATORS AT THEIR
DISCRETION TO OFFER LIMITED AND TEMPORARY EVACUATION TO
DEPENDENTS AND NON-ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL AT FIELD SITES.

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ACTION EA-06

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3700

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 3140

LIMDIS

8. THE LARGER CONSEQUENCES OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS FOR U.S. POLICY AND FOR THE OPERATION OF THIS MISSION CANNOT BE FULLY ANTICIPATED AT THIS TIME, BUT WE AND WASHINGTON AGENCIES MUST BEGIN TO ADDRESS THEM NOW. THE LARGEST ISSUES ARE THOSE OF BASIC POLICY:

- A) CAN LAOS, UNDER EFFECTIVE PL DOMINATION, CONTINUE TO CONSTITUTE A VIABLE BUFFER BETWEEN NORTH VIET-NAM AND THAILAND?
- B) DO WE WISH TO MAINTAIN ANYTHING LIKE OUR PRESENT LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR A LAO GOVERNMENT OF THAT STRIPE?
- C) WHAT IN FINAL ANALYSIS ARE U.S. OBJECTIVES IN LAOS IN LIGHT OF CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES ELSEWHERE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA?

9. IMPORTANT SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS ARE:

- A) WHETHER WE CAN OR SHOULD CONTINUE THE MAP PROGRAM IF MINISTRY OF DEFENSE CEASES TO BE A VIENTIANE SIDE OPERATION AND IF PL BECOME ABLE TO INSIST THAT THEIR FORCES SHARE IN ITS BENEFITS.
- B) WHETHER WE SHOULD CONTINUE OUR PARTICIPATION IN FEOF IF OUR ABILITY TO CARRY OUT OTHER AID PROGRAMS IS CURTAILED BY LACK OF FIELD REPRESENTATION OR INABILITY TO TRAVEL.

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- C) HOW WE SHOULD REACT IF VANG PAO AND THE HMONG DECIDE TO EXFILTRATE MR II AND SEEK REFUGE IN THAILAND.

10. OTHER QUESTIONS THAT WILL CONFRONT US AS A MISSION INCLUDE:

- A) WHETHER NEW EMPLOYEES AND DEPENDENTS SCHEDULED TO TRAVEL TO POST IN NEXT FEW WEEKS SHOULD BE HELD UP, AND WHETHER DEPENDENTS NOW HERE SHOULD BE REDUCED THROUGH SUCH MEANS AS ADVANCE TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION FOR THOSE SCHEDULED TO DEPART DURING SUMMER REPLACEMENT CYCLE.

- B) WHETHER WE CAN CONTINUE TO EMPLOY VIETNAMESE NATIONALS WHO CHOSE TO REMAIN HERE AND ARE OBLIGED TO TAKE OUT PRG DOCUMENTATION, AND IF SO UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES.

11. WE ARE CONFIDENT OF OUR ABILITY TO HANDLE TACTICAL ASPECTS OF SITUATION AND WILL PROCEED PRUDENTLY BUT QUIETLY. ANY PREMATURE MOVES ON OUR PART COULD DESTROY WHAT REMAINS OF VIENTIANE SIDE MORALE, NOT TO MENTION UNNERVING FURTHER OUR DEPENDENTS AND LOCAL EMPLOYEES. WE REITERATE, HOWEVER, BELIEF THAT QUESTIONS

SET FORTH ABOVE NEED CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON AS WELL
AS HERE, AND ON A PRIORITY BASIS. WE ARE REMAINING
STEADY, BUT EVENTS ARE MOVING RAPIDLY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
CLIMATE IS WORSENING FROM DAY TO DAY.
CHAPMAN

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